

EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

1. An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Brian E. Turung on February 13, 2009.

The application has been amended as follows:

Canceled claims 7, 10, 14-18, 21, 22, 24, 26, 30, 32-34, 36 and 38-42.

In claim 1, in line 2, after "lower flange half, " deleted "a" and replaced with --an annular--.

In claim 1, in line 4, after "designed to" inserted --axially--.

In claim 1, in line 5, after "secured together" inserted --such that the through-opening in said upper flange half is axially aligned with the through-opening in said lower flange half and said fixing element is clamped between said flange halves--.

In claim 1, in line 6, after "flange half" deleted "designed to" and replaced with --applying a clamping force to said fixing element and said locking ring to--.

In claim 1, in lines 7-8, after "ring engaging" deleted "said fixing element and at least one of said flange halves" and replaced with --an annular recess

along an inside surface of said fixing element and an annular recess along the through-opening of said lower flange half--.

In claim 1, in line 9, after "designed to engage" deleted "and" and replaced with --a complementary groove around the gas-filled spring to--.

In claim 1, in line 10, before "connection" deleted "flange" and replaced with --flanged--.

In claim 1, in line 11, after "between said" deleted "upper flange half" and replaced with --fixing element--.

In claim 1, in line 13, before "when said upper" deleted "designed to movably engagable with at least one of said flange halves" and replaced with --movably engaging with said upper flange half--.

In claim 1, in line 14, after "fixing element" deleted "designed to apply a" and replaced with --applying a radially inward--.

In claim 1, in lines 17-18, after "fixing element" deleted "designed to movably engage and apply" and replaced with --applying--.

In claim 1, in line 19, after "secured together, " deleted "at least one of said flange halves has" and replaced with --the through-opening of said upper flange half having--.

In claim 1, in line 22, after "and said fixing element" deleted "designed to engage" and replaced with --axially sliding along--.

In claim 1, in line 22, after "to move" inserted --radially--.

In claim 1, in line 23, after "also move" inserted --radially--.

In claim 8, in line 3, before "lower flange" deleted "said upper flange half and" and replaced with --upper flange half and said--.

In claim 19, in line 3, before "fixing element" deleted "a" and replaced with --an annular--.

In claim 19, in line 4, after "designed to" inserted --axially--.

In claim 19, in line 6, after "secured together" inserted --such that the through-opening in said upper flange half is axially aligned with the through-opening in said lower flange half and said fixing element is clamped between said flange halves, said upper flange half and said lower flange half applying a clamping force to said fixing element and said locking ring to engage the gas-filled spring when said upper flange half and said lower flange half are secured together, said locking ring engaging an annular recess along an inside surface of said fixing element and an annular recess along the through-opening of said lower flange half when said upper flange half and said lower flange half are secured together, said locking ring designed to engage a complementary groove on the body of the gas-filled spring to secure the gas-filled spring in said flanged connection while being fixed in position between said fixing element and said lower flange half--.

In claim 19, in lines 9-10, after "said fixing element," deleted "said locking ring designed to be at least partially inserted into a groove on the body of the gas-filled spring".

In claim 19, in line 11, after "fixing element" deleted "designed to movably engage" and replaced with --axially sliding along--.

In claim 19, in line 12, before "locking ring" deleted "and to apply a clamping force on said" and replaced with --to apply a radially inward clamping force on said fixing element and said--.

In claim 19, in line 14, after "to move" inserted --radially--.

In claim 19, in line 15, after "to move" inserted --radially--.

In claim 29, in line 2, after "to move" deleted "downwardly".

2. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

As to claims 1 and 19, Boughton (US 2,868,576) discloses the claimed flanged connection with the exception of the locking ring engaging an annular recess along an inside surface of the fixing element and an annular recess along the through-opening of the lower flange half when the upper flange half and the lower flange half are secured together, the locking ring designed to engage a complementary groove on the body of the gas-filled spring to secure the gas-filled spring in the flanged connection while being fixed in position between the fixing element and the lower flange half.

There is no teaching or suggestion, absent the applicants' own disclosure, for one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the flanged connection disclosed by Boughton to have the above mentioned elemental features. Furthermore, such modifications would yield unexpected and unpredictable results.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Conclusion

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to the applicant's disclosure. The following patent shows the state of the art with respect to flanged connections:

Graff (US 3,687,494) is cited for pertaining to flanged connections comprising upper and lower flange halves, a fixing element and a locking ring.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to MICHAEL P. FERGUSON whose telephone number is (571)272-7081. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F (6:30am-3:00pm).

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Daniel P. Stodola can be reached on (571)272-7087. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

MPF
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/Michael P. Ferguson/
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 3679